

BRYAN J. BAPTISTE
Mayor



GARY HEU
Administrative Assistant

COUNTY OF KAUAI

KAUA'I FIRE DEPARTMENT

News Release

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ROBERT WESTERMAN, chief
Tel (808) 241- 6500
Fax (808) 241-6508

County interns tasked with completing 6-week projects

LĪHU'E – County officials completely revamped their summer youth employment program this year, giving high school and college students the opportunity to handle 6-week projects from beginning to end. Previously, students were hired during the summer to assist county personnel with day-to-day operations.

"We wanted to offer our young people a different work experience this year," explained Mayor Bryan J. Baptiste. "We felt that by giving them project-oriented tasks that simulate what they might face when they enter the workforce would be very valuable to them."

About 40 students employed as interns in various county departments this summer are getting "real-world" experiences with coordinating large-scale projects.

Ryan Delos Reyes and Marc Shibata, who were assigned to the Kaua'i Fire Department, are charged with collecting an extensive amount of data that'll help the department with its strategic planning.

Once they've gathered all the information, these interns will input the data into a Geographical Information System (GIS) file, a highly sophisticated mapping program, that'll enable fire department officials to make important decisions within a relatively short period of time.

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Kaua'i Fire Chief Robert Westerman is pleased with the work being done by Delos Reyes and Shibata. "They're doing a great job," said Westerman, "I just outlined the major points of the project and they ran with it."

The interns' first task was to print out maps of all the large communities on the island – Hanalei, Kapa'a, Līhu'e, Kōloa, Kalāheo, Hanapēpē, Waimea and Kekaha. They turned to Mark Marshall, Kaua'i Civil Defense administrator, for assistance on this and he provided the young men with materials they needed.

Then, Delos Reyes and Shibata plunged into extensive research.

Tapping into a variety of resources, the interns plotted the information they were asked to find on a 3-foot by 2-foot map of the entire island as they collected the data.

This included the number of responses firefighters made from each Kaua'i fire station between May 2004 and June of this year which they gleaned from the fire department's paper files.

Information on the areas of expected population and housing growth, along with the number of hotels that are already in existence and ones that are scheduled to be built within the next five years, were also placed on the same map.

"We went online to the Hawai'i state government website and navigated to the DBEDT (state Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism) pages to get this information," noted Shibata. "And we also talked to people in the Planning Department and checked the yellow pages for information on hotels."

To research the island's flood zones, Delos Reyes and Shibata clicked on the Public Disaster Center's website, www.pdc.org, and obtained the data they needed.

"We also studied the distance between each fire station to determine response times because of the tie-in with emergency calls and plotted the information on the map, said Delos Reyes.

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In the next few weeks, the interns are scheduled to visit all seven Kaua'i fire stations and will document the condition of each station.

"This information will help the fire department (officials) with future renovation plans," said Shibata.

Researching facts about Kaua'i fascinates these two county interns, especially learning about the island's population growth.

"By the year 2020, Kaua'i's population has the potential to be about 100,000," noted Delos Reyes. "It's hard to imagine that from 62,000, the population might increase over 50 percent in just 15 years."

Shibata was surprised to learn that the Garden Island has grown about four percent each year for the last five years. "It doesn't seem like there's that many more people on the island."

Near the end of their summer employment, these young men plan to do a presentation of their findings to the Kaua'i County Team, which includes the mayor and all county department heads, during one of their daily morning meetings.

For Shibata, a 2005 Kaua'i High School graduate who will be attending the University of Hawai'i this fall as a mechanical engineer major, working for the county as a first-time intern has been an enjoyable experience, and something that'll assist him in the future.

"I think it'll help me later when I do research and have to make my own decisions," said Shibata.

Delos Reyes, a returning county intern, is on break from Kaua'i Community College where he is a liberal arts major. Last summer, he worked for the Kaua'i Police Department studying forensics.

What he particularly likes about working in the fire department is the fact that he is learning about field as well as administrative work, said Delos Reyes.

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“Although my goal is to become an EMT (emergency medical technician), it’s interesting to learn about both sides of the fire department,” he said.

Both young men plan to settle on Kaua‘i after furthering their education.

“I want to share my knowledge with the community I grew up in,” said Shibata philosophically.

For Delos Reyes, his decision to continue to live on Kaua‘i is based on economics. He said, “Right now, Kaua‘i’s EMTs make more money than any other county in the state.”

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For more information, contact

Mary Daubert, public information officer
Tel (808) 241-6303